

Appl. No. 09/688,281

Amdt. Dated February 2, 2005

Reply to Office action of January 4, 2005

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph on page 1, beginning at line 18 with the following:

Patent 5,737,527 describes the ability of a viewer to vote on the direction of a broadcast. U.S. Patent No. 5,848,934 to Shiels, et al. (the '934 patent) describes a branch-structured narrative entertainment. The narrative branches to different story line paths based upon "modified attribute values." However, neither the '527 patent nor the '934 patent describe or teach means for a community of participants on a network to influence the programming on the network in real time or near real time.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 7 at line 13 and continuing to page 8 line 14 with the following:

As used in this Application, the term "broadcast content" may comprise a live performance, a pre-recorded performance, and an interactive game that is broadcast over a broadcast means such as a television broadcast network, a cable broadcast network, and the Internet. As noted above, the present invention is a system and method for allowing a community of network users to influence the outcome of programming. Referring to **Figure 1**, the communication exchange of the present invention is illustrated. Network users register 10 with a network provider and request tokens that allow the network user to vote in any particular poll that the network user desires. The network provider provides the tokens 12 to the network users for subsequent use. As will be noted below, the number of tokens and the charge for those tokens are all made in the usual accounting that is known in the art and occurs with normal content systems such as cable television

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and the like. Content providers thereafter provide content 14 to network users for subsequent viewing. The network provider provides the various poll questions 16 to the network users for subsequent voting regarding the content. Additionally these polls may be inserted in-band into the program stream from the content provider, Network users can then vote 18 by using the tokens that have been provided to the network users and will vote based upon the poll questions 16 that have been provided during the course of the content. That vote 18 is provided to the network provider that tallies the vote and provides the vote results 20 to the content provider for subsequent modification of the content. In addition, the poll results are separately provided 22 to the network users so that the network users can see how their respective community of network users voted on the particular poll in question. Longer duration polls 16 may be ongoing while feedback to network users 22 occurs so that each member of the community has visibility into the shared dynamic and the opportunity to contribute to or control the dynamics of the community based on response from other community members. This is a desirable feature when the members of the community are not in visual or aural communication with each other and provides a way to have many of the same responses and interactions as they would if they were in the same room. After the poll results had been made available to the content provider, the content provider then provides modified broadcast content 24 to the network users.